

News Release



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Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Reforestation Project Receives Support from Disney as Part of Company's \$6 Million Investment in Forest Carbon Projects throughout California

California State Parks announced today that it received a \$2.9 million investment from Disney to support the Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Reforestation Project. The support will be used to plant thousands of additional trees in a forest almost completely destroyed by fire.

Today's investment builds on Disney's longstanding history of nature conservation and environmental stewardship, a legacy that spans more than sixty years. This investment marks more than \$20 million from Disney in forest carbon projects since 2009.

"Disney's citizenship efforts are focused on the well-being of children and families, and conserving nature for future generations is an important part of this commitment" said Leslie Goodman, senior vice president of Corporate Citizenship at Disney. "The work we do with dedicated environmental stewards, including State of California, Department of Parks and Recreation, is helping to protect forest ecosystems and wildlife habitats that are critical to the livelihood of communities across California."

"We welcome and applaud Disney's commitment to help reforest this treasured park," said Ruth Coleman, director of California State Parks. "Disney's assistance will help restore vital habitat and provide important climate benefits of carbon sequestration."

The Cuyamaca Rancho State Park's conifer forest was destroyed by the catastrophic 2003 Cedar Fire and little natural regeneration has been observed to date. The reforestation project is a multi-year plan to restore a diverse native forest favorable for wildlife habitat and resistant to catastrophic fire events.

Mixed conifer forests in the Park have provided very important habitat in the region. During the past decade, over 50% of the mixed conifer forest in San Diego County has been burned by wildfires. The project will restore biological diversity and ecosystem functioning, providing significant wildlife benefits. The project will also assist in preventing the spread of invasive weeds and reducing erosion risks which protect watershed function, archaeological sites,

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botanical reserves, and recreational capacity of the park. The park, located 40 miles east of San Diego on Highway 79, has averaged 420,000 annual visitors in the past three years.

Long-term climate benefits will result from the accelerated restoration of the forested landscape. The project is currently undergoing third-party verification to become the first reforestation project and first forest project on public land to become registered at the Climate Action Reserve.

In October and November of 2003, the Cedar Fire burned over 270,686 acres in Southern California including almost the entire Cuyamaca Rancho State Park. This was the largest fire in California as recorded by fire perimeter maps which have been used to document the extent of burned areas since the early 1900's. Conifer mortality in the park was extremely high (>95%) and very few seed cones survived due to the fire severity and extremely high temperatures. The coniferous forest and mixed conifer/hardwood forest that existed prior to the 2003 Cedar Fire has largely been replaced with *ceanothus palmerii*, a shrub which now grows in dense stands throughout the park.

California State Parks, working in conjunction with CAL FIRE, University of San Diego, and other academic and stakeholder groups designed a multi-year reforestation plan which consists of planting approximately 1,000,000 seedlings across 10% of the park lands where the mature conifer forests once grew. Through maturation and seed dispersal these seedlings will promote the restoration of the conifer forests over time.

Disney is part of a growing list of companies and organizations that include: American Forests, Arbor Day Foundation, California State Parks Foundation, ConocoPhillips, Coca-Cola, Stater Bros. Markets, Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Interpretive Association, Odwalla, and others working to restore a healthy forest ecosystem to Cuyamaca Rancho State Park. Please join these organizations to support this endeavor. Donations to support the project can be made through a link on the California State Parks Foundation web site: calparks.org/reforest.

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